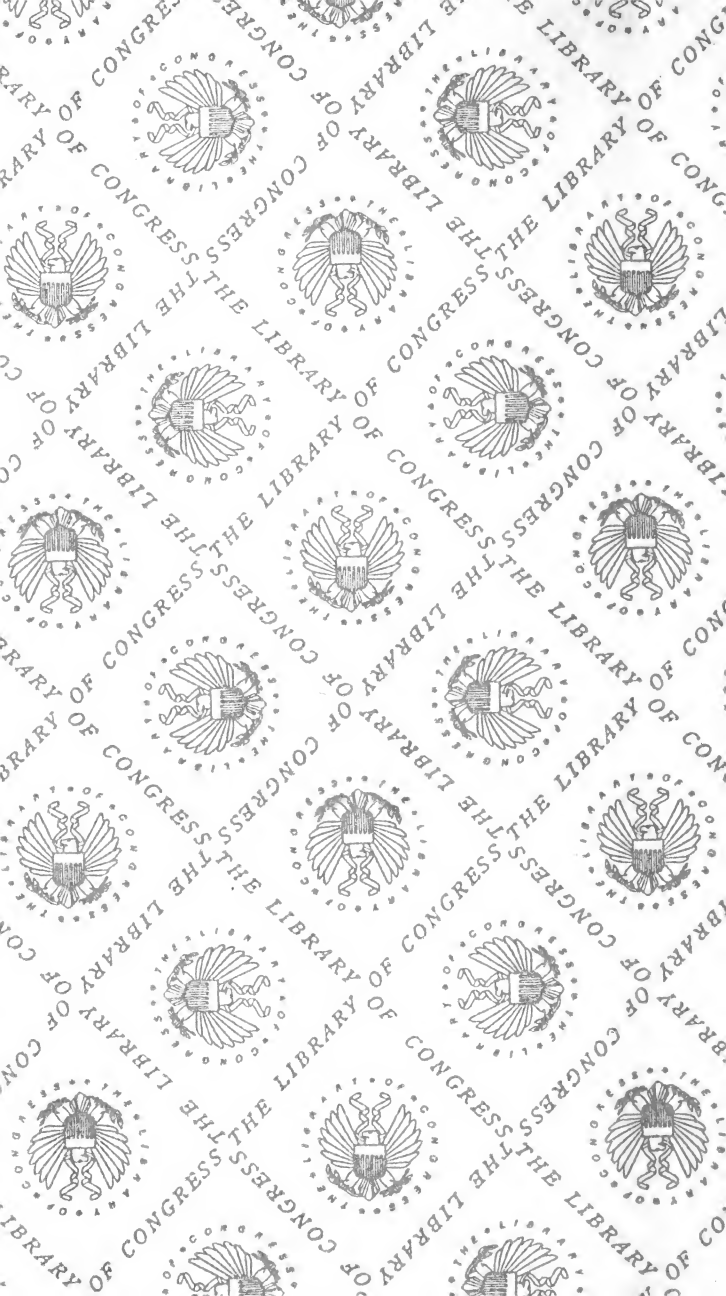


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FREE THOUGHT
OR THE
COMING DISPENSATION.

—O—

BY
✓
RICHARD BEWLEY, M. D.
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—O—

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Free Thought or the Coming Dispensation.

INTRODUCTION

The following essays are part of the results of many years thought, study and observation on the part of the writer. He does not claim that any of the ideas are new, or that they have not been more elegantly expressed by others; but his hope is that by stating certain facts in logical order, in plain, unmistakable terms, some of his fellow creatures may be enabled to pick up grains of knowledge and truth, and digest and assimilate them, and so develop their mental and spiritual growth.

Have you ever watched a pigeon feed-

ing her young? The young birds, when they hear their parents coming, turn up their heads and open their mouths to the greatest extent, then the old bird puts her beak into the young one's throat and discharges the partially digested contents of her craw into the young bird's throat. The young birds grow; but they soon leave the nest and pick up food and digest and assimilate it for themselves.

If a Hygienic Enthusiast was to arise and teach that the only way for the present generation of men to attain perfect development was to live on food which had been masticated and partially digested by the proceeding generation, it is probable that that Enthusiast would have but few followers. And yet, this is just what is practiced in mental and spiritual matters. We are expected to live, spiritually, on ideas which were pre-digested by ignorant, or interested men ages ago. Wake up! Be MEN, and think for yourselves. You have been "squabs" long enough.

ESSAY No. I, MAN.

In these essays Man will be considered as a dual being, consisting of body and soul, or spirit. Some thinkers make a distinction between soul and spirit; but in these essays the terms will be used interchangeably. As a general definition of the spirit of man, it may be said to be that which makes the difference between a living man and a corpse. Scientific men have determined, with a great deal of accuracy, what the body consists of: So many parts of earthly matter, carbon and water. They trace the growth of the body through the development of cells, and describe other wonders relating to the growth of the material part of man; but as to the everlasting soul they seem to know nothing and care less. It is said that Prof. Tyndall likened the invisible part of man to the light-giving flame of a candle,—“Blow the candle out, and

where is the flame?" This phase of thought will be referred to later on in these essays. All denominations of Christians and many other Religionists profess to believe in a continued life for the soul, or spirit, after it has left the body. Some miserable specimens believe that the spirits of the departed remain shivering over the graves of their bodies, waiting for the last trump to sound, when they will re-enter their bodies and pass on to **Heaven**—or else be dammed. The wild Indian, more cheerfully, expects to meet his faithful dog in the happy hunting ground and have a good time. People profess to believe in a spiritual life; but with the bulk of them it is merely a profession—they have no rational belief in the matter at all—they have never thought of it, and if you ask them about it they will merely eject some undigested morsel of doctrine that has been chewed from one generation to another. If they had any vital belief in a responsible life in the world to come they

would regulate their actions differently while in the body.

ESSAY No. II, KNOWLEDGE.

While the soul, or spirit, is in the body the only means it has of acquiring knowledge is by the exercise of the five senses—seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting and smelling. By means of these senses we can also gain advantage of the knowledge and experience of others by reading their writings, hearing them speak, and seeing their work. The knowledge thus acquired is of as much, or more, importance as that acquired by our own endeavors, as it would be impossible for each individual to find out all that is known about any given subject by his own researches—life is too short—even supposing he had the capacity.

When facts, or apparent facts, accumulate they are ranged into Sciences and by the reasoning faculties Theories are constructed to harmonize the facts, and sometimes the theories lead to the dis-

covery of new facts. But the senses are not absolutely reliable—things are frequently very different from what they appear to be—and the bulk of knowledge gained through them is only comparatively true. New facts are observed which are incompatible with the old theories, and the theories have to be remodeled.

The only absolutely positive and unchangeable knowledge that Man possesses, is Mathematical knowledge. Two and two make four—and we cannot imagine any process by which the sum of two and two could be made either greater or less than four. A straight line is the shortest distance between two points—no one can imagine a shorter distance between those points. Again, the square of the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle is equal to the sum of the squares of the base and perpendicular of the triangle. This proposition (the 47th of the 1st Book of Euclid's Elements of Plane Geometry) is not self-evident; but if you

commence at the beginning and follow the demonstrations of the preceeding forty-six propositions, the absolute truth of this one will be made clear. In other branches of knowledge it is not so—there is nothing absolute—all is comparative. Thus, there is nothing so large or so small but what there may be larger or smaller—nothing so cold or so hot but there might be colder or hotter and so on.

The unreliability of the senses is well illustrated by the rising and setting of the sun. A few centuries ago any “heretic” who ventured to say that the rising and setting of the sun was only apparent and was caused by the rotation of the earth upon its axis, would be condemned to torture and the stake. Truth and reason have prevailed, and at the present time there are very few civilized people who doubt that the earth revolves, although we cannot *feel* the motion of the earth, and our eyes *see* the rising and setting of the sun!

ESSAY No. III, IGNORANCE.

Ignorance may be divided into three degrees, or classes. First. Complete absence of knowledge, as in babyhood—the state in which we all commence this life. Second. A slight amount of knowledge, gained by experience and accompanied by a disposition to believe whatever their teachers tell them; but there is no desire to think, or investigate matters for themselves. This is the state of the bulk of mankind. It is possible to instruct this class although they are slow to learn—they are inclined to limit the possibilities of things to the narrowness of their own small experience. If they are told anything that is new, or wonderful, to them, they are inclined to doubt it because they have never heard of such a thing. If the matter is so well attested that they cannot deny it, they conclude it

must be "miraculous." This class have a good deal of conceit and they don't like to admit that they don't know everything, and so they tell lies to cover their ignorance, neither thinking of, nor caring for, the evil that will result from those lies. The following well-worn anecdote will illustrate this phase of ignorance. A child, one night, asked his father what the moon was made of? The father, instead of telling him that he did not know—or telling him that he must wait until he was old enough to understand such things—told him that the moon was made of green cheese. The child believed it for a time; but when he grew older he found out that his father had deceived him, and from that time forth he had no respect for, or confidence in, his father.

In the third class we have those who have acquired a great deal of knowledge; but their conceit has increased in a still greater ratio—they know it all and it is impossible to learn more. A great many

Scientific Men, Preachers and Teachers
belong to this class.

ESSAY No. IV,
GOD THE CREATOR.

“No man saw God at any time.”

“Ye cannot see God and live.”

“The fool hath said in his heart,
There is no God.”

It ought to be a self-evident truth that no man, or number of men, can comprehend the Creator, for the simple reason that a finite creature cannot comprehend the Infinite. It would be easier to pack the ocean into a teaspoon than for man to comprehend the Creator. It is simply an impossibility and man will never accomplish it. But there is no objection to our trying to learn as much about Him as we can, and this is only to be done by studying His works—the works of Nature—always remembering that we are liable to error and never can attain perfection. The “fools” who say “there is no God” are in a pitiable state of ignorance and darkness; but it is doubtful whether they are worse off than

our teachers and preachers who, with an equal amount of ignorance, have the added conceit to think they know all about His thoughts, intentions and actions. They can tell you what will please Him and what will vex Him—and what will happen to you if you don't believe all the blasphemous nonsense they give you in the name of religion.

If you try to follow and understand the researches and discoveries of the Astronomer you will be lost in wonder at the infinite magnitude of creation—at the uncountable number of suns and systems floating about in space, and the unimaginable distances between them. Such studies ought to bring home to each individual that he forms a very small part of creation. Again, let him study the revelations made by the microscope and he will see minute organisms, which for excellence of workmanship and adaptedness to their circumstances, are as perfect as himself. Surely the existence of all these wonderful works must necessitate the

existence of a Creator. If you examine a colony of mites in a cheese, through a microscope, you will see a busy scene—innumerable living creatures, each well formed as to body, limbs, etc., and having the power of being fruitful and multiplying, all struggling and trampling on each other, just as other inhabitants of this world do, to promote their own interests. Now, is it probable that these mites can have any knowledge of the size or shape of the cheese which they inhabit?—or of the nature and size of the cow that yielded the milk from which the cheese was made?—or of the Dairy-maid who made the cheese?—or of the Farmer who hired the dairy-maid? Yet it is probable that the mite is as capable of determining the proportions, desires and intentions of the farmer as finite man is of comprehending the designs and intentions of the Creator. We are quite unable to describe Him, and the best attempt we can make is to attribute all the good qualities we can conceive of and

then humbly acknowledge that our description falls infinitely short of the original. Thus we may say that He is Almighty, All-knowing, Present everywhere. All-wise. Perfectly just and All-loving. This is about the highest ideal we can form. Now, as He is perfect, there can be nothing useless about Him, is it not fair to conclude that He has no feet, for if He is omnipresent—filling all space—He would have no room to walk about in and feet would be of no use. For the same reason He would have no use for hands, arms, stomach and digestive tract, or any of the organs and tissues that go to make up the body of man. But there would remain Infinite Intelligence, Power, Wisdom, Justice and Love! Such a Being would be more worthy of our worship and veneration than the blundering, passionate, jealous, cursing creature which Moses fashioned after his own image to frighten his followers, and succeeding generations with. It appears to the present writer that Moses, al-

though acquainted with the learning of the Egyptians, was a great example of ignorance of the second and third grades—he “knew all” about the Most High, and supplied his followers with an immense quantity of “green cheese” which has disordered the mental digestion of the people to the present day. But the race of man is growing older and finding out that the moon is not made of green cheese. .

ESSAY No. V, THE BIBLE.

The Bible is a wonderful book in many respects—it contains many valuable truths—shows a deep knowledge of human nature—and is a storehouse from which quotations applicable to a great number of subjects can be made; but as a history it is no longer regarded as true by any person of education who is at liberty to use his intellectual faculties.

The power the Bible has over a large portion of the civilized portion of mankind is wonderful. It is admitted, even by its worshippers, that it contains a great number of errors; but that is of no importance—it is the “Word of God”—and absolutely Divine—errors and all! This blind worship of a mere book, which is obviously full of errors, is the greatest example of hypnotism on record. By continual “suggestion” or rather “assertion” our teachers and preach-

ers have compelled generation after generation to profess to believe, that belief in the divinity of its contents is absolutely necessary to insure salvation.

In ancient times scientific and other truths were veiled in mystical or figurative language, and learned men have traced the origin of the biblical history of the "Creation" and "Fall" to older systems of religion. Some Geologists explain that the six-days creation refers to six geological periods, each of which may consist of thousands, or millions of years—but this is of no use. If definite statements are to be explained away by saying they mean something else, it reduces the whole matter to the value of the Irishman's argument, or proof that there can be no such color as black because "black's white and white's no color at all." It is the literal meaning of the words, which has caused so much mental misery, madness, murder, war, persecution and crime of every kind—that our teachers, priests and parsons cram down

the throats of the people in order to keep them in darkness and subjugation. Now, it may be asked, if the Bible and its effects are so bad, why does the good and loving Father of all permit it to exist? The same question may be asked with reference to venomous reptiles, "kissing bugs," germs of disease, etc., etc. A partial answer to these questions, it is hoped, will be found in future essays.

"The letter killeth; but the Spirit giveth life." The object of the writer is to do what little he can towards stopping the killing process of the letter, trusting that the Spirit will scatter life and light abroad.

ESSAY No. VI,
CREATION, and the "FALL."

It is not the writer's intention to point out all the inconsistencies contained in the Bible; but he will try to confine himself to those errors which have most influence on the state of the world at the present time.

In the first chapter of Genesis an account of the Creation is given which may be summed up thus: In the first day Light and Darkness were made. In the second day the Firmament was made. In the third day, dry land, grass, herbs and fruit trees were made, and the day's work declared to be good. In the fourth day the Sun and Moon and "Stars also" were made—Good. In the fifth day fowls and fish, each to bring forth after his kind, good. In the sixth day cattle, creeping things and also Man after His image—male and female created He them—Good.

Creation being finished, the Lord rested on the seventh day, and afterwards whatever was wanted was "made" out of materials already created. In Chap. II. we are told that the Lord determined to make man in His own image (had He forgotten that he had already done so—male and female—on the sixth day?) so he set to work and made a man out of dust and breathed into him the breath of life. It occurred to the Lord that the man might be lonesome, so He determined to make a wife for him. Instead of making her out of dust He made her out of a rib taken from the side of the man. The man was called Adam and the woman was called Eve, and it is from this pair, we are told, the whole human race is descended. The Lord planted a garden and gave Adam and Eve permission to do what they liked with everything in it with the exception of the tree of knowledge and the tree of life, the fruit of which trees they were not to eat. He told them that if they eat of that

fruit "on that day" they would "surely die." Now, if the Lord was prescient and knew all things, He must have known, right well, that the couple would go for the forbidden fruit without delay—and probably He intended them to do so for if they had remained in their baby-like state of innocence they would have been of no use. The record says the Devil came along and tempted Eve, telling her to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge and that she would not die. She persuaded Adam and they both eat of the forbidden fruit and they did not die. So the Devil told the truth and the Lord told a lie. When the Lord found out that His commands had been disobeyed He got into a rage, cursed His own work—which he had previously pronounced to be good—and compelled the Devil to crawl on his belly instead of using his previous mode of locomotion. He, the Almighty, must have felt fear, for He turned Adam and Eve out of the garden and put an angel armed with a

flaming sword to guard the entrance to prevent their return "lest" they should eat of the fruit of the tree of life and become equal to Us. Now, what does this plural "Us" mean? Is it like the editorial "We" or is it an admission that there were other Gods beside Himself? We may infer that he was not alone. He must have had a wife, or at any rate a female companion, for we are told, further on, that His sons were struck with the beauty of the daughters of men and took liberties with them. Notwithstanding His displeasure the Lord had compassion for Adam and Eve, for before turning them out of the garden He must have thought that the fig-leaf garments would not be sufficient protection for them, so He made suits of clothes out of animal's skins for them to face the hardships of the world in. He repented that He had made man.

Adam and Eve had two sons, Cain and Abel. Cain was gardener and Abel was a hunter. Cain made an offering of

vegetables and fruit to the Lord, and Abel made an offering of meat. The Lord preferred the meat to the vegetables, which caused jealousy between the brothers and Cain murdered Abel—and then came more cursing. After Abel was murdered Adam had another son whom he called Seth. He must have had a number of daughters also, although it is not mentioned, or the race would soon have become extinct. It seems to the present writer that the mode of creation of the human race mentioned in the sixth day's work would be more respectable, moral and healthy than the rib-plan, supposing that the plural "them" (male and female created He them) indicated a considerable plurality of both male and female specimens. The churches affirm that the whole race is descended from Adam and Eve. In this case the world must have been populated by generation after generation of incest.

Now who, having the free use of his

senses, can respect this passionate, jealous, cursing, lying,, frightened, regretful creature that Moses describes as God? Surely, if instead of saying that God had created man in His own image, he had said that he, Moses, had described the Almighty after his, Moses' own pattern, he would have been nearer to the truth. Moses, although a learned man, must have had a great deal of ignorance of the third class—he thought he know it all.

ESSAY No VII, REDEMPTION.

At the present time no man of intelligence and education believes the account of the "fall" of man, as given in Genesis, to be historically true. Then, it follows that if we didn't fall there is no necessity to be "redeemed" by a "bloody sacrifice." Peter and his brethren were ignorant men and had no higher idea of the sublimity of the Almighty than Moses had. In plain English the "plan of salvation," as handed down to us is this: The only way the Almighty could devise, having been outwitted and overreached by His own creatures, and having had his patience sorely tried by the disobedience and wickedness of His chosen people, for weary ages, to sooth his ruffled feelings and remove His curse from the human race, was to humbug Himself by offering Himself as a sacri-

fice to Himself. In order to carry out this idea He had to break His own laws, and commit fornication with the affianced wife of a carpenter, and be born in the form of a man. And this is the sort of stuff we are taught to believe under penalty of everlasting damnation, should we have any doubt about it! In due time the Almighty was born of the Virgin Mary in the form of a man, who was called Jesus. The whole arrangement is repulsive to the advanced minds of the present day, and surely must be a slander on the Almighty. And yet, it will be said, Christianity must have had a foundation—a beginning. But even at the very beginning opinions differed—Peter and Paul could not agree, and Paul accused Peter of preaching a Jesus he knew not of.

Such terms as Christ, Son of God, Cross, Resurrection, etc., have been determined by Students of Antiquity, to be mystical terms relating to Astronomical and other religions which were much

older than the time of Peter—or of Moses. Peter may have picked up fragments of these matters and in his conceited ignorance patched them up into a human history. Paul, being a more learned man, could not agree with Peter.

The Greeks, whom we call heathens and idolators, had a number of altars in their temple dedicated to various Gods; but they felt there was still something more to be worshipped than art could express, so they erected an altar in their temple and dedicated it to the Unknown God. They did not claim to know it all, and in this were wiser than the Jews or Christians.

ESSAY No. VIII, THE LIFE OF JESUS.

There being no necessity for a "Redeemer" to save mankind from the effects of a fall that did not take place, and as profane history makes no mention of Jesus and his works, a great many persons are led to think that no such person ever existed; but as in all great crises and revolutions a great man rises up as a leader, we will assume that a great Teacher and wonder-worker did walk the earth somewhere about the time in which Jesus is said to have lived.

It is well known that the Gospels were not written until long after the events recorded in them were said to have occurred. We all know how a story grows by being handed about from one person to another and this, together with the figurative style of Eastern people, and also taking their ignorance into account, will make it evident that there was nothing

transcending the powers of man in the life of Jesus. It does not appear that He claimed to be the Son of God any more than all of us may, as being the children of our Heavenly Father. Perhaps He may have had exceptionally high opinion of Himself, if His mother brought Him up to believe in the immaculate conception, in order to maintain her own reputation. To proceed:

Jesus was born in a stable in Bethlehem, whither His mother and Joseph had come to pay tribute, or taxes. He appears to have been knocked about from place to place a good deal in order to fulfil various prophecies, which probably had nothing to do with Him.

We are next told that when Jesus was about twelve years old His mother and Joseph brought Him up to Jerusalem to attend the feast of the Passover. He gave them the slip, and they started on their homeward journey without Him. When they missed Him they returned to Jerusalem to seek Him, and they found

Him in the Temple arguing in a very precocious manner with the priests. He returned home with Joseph and Mary and was subject to them, being "as was supposed the son of Joseph and Mary"—A supposition that was most likely correct.

It was promised to David that the kingdom should never be taken from his house. Notwithstanding the dispersion and bondage of the Jews and the absorption of the kingdom by the Romans, it is sought to show that Jesus was the legitimate descendent of David, and King of the Jews. A long genealogy is given from David to Joseph the carpenter; but what this has to do with the matter is difficult to see, as it is distinctly stated that Joseph had nothing to do with the parentage of Jesus. In St. Luke's Gospel a genealogy is given from Joseph backward to David and from David to Adam. This genealogy differs a good deal from the one given by St. Matthew; but that is a trifle of no

importance.

The Gospels give us no further particulars of the life of Jesus until he was about thirty years old, when he came out in public as a teacher, healer and wonder-worker. Jesus appears to have led a good, moral life—it is a great pity his followers at the present day do not more generally follow his example in this respect. He did not get married—it would not do for all men to follow his example in this, although a great many might do so with great advantage to the world. He went about healing the sick and performing wonders. His teachings brought upon Him the enmity of the Jews, who sought to entrap Him in the meshes of the law. In one case He showed wisdom equal, if not greater, than the wisdom of Solomon. The Jews brought a woman, who had been caught in the act of adultery, to Him to pass judgment on, hoping He would say something contrary to the law; but He quoted the law and said she should be stoned—with the proviso

that "he that was without sin should cast the first stone." The men were all self-condemned by their consciences and slunk away, and the woman's life was spared. This was very clever and completely "took the wind out of the sails" of His adversaries; but the principle would not admit of general application, for where would you find Policemen, Soldiers, Lawyers, Magistrates, Judges or Kings so free from sin as to be fit to pronounce judgment on criminals?—Punishment would be impossible, and the fear of it being removed crime of all kinds would run riot without fear of the consequences.

The miracle of casting out the devils into the swine did not show much wisdom or divinity, or He would have known that it would be of no use, as to confining the devils as they would be loose again as soon as the pigs were dead, and certainly the owner of the swine had just cause for complaint. He was advised to go away, and he went.

He did not show much wisdom, or divinity, when he cursed the fig-tree for not bearing fruit out of season. Even His disciples reproved Him for that. Nor did He show much Almighty power in not being able to do mighty works in the neighborhood where He was known "because of their unbelief." He went into the Synagogue and conducted Himself in a manner that would not be permitted in any church in the present day, and thereby he increased the animosity of the Jews toward Him. He was condemned by the Jews, but the Roman authorities did not consider Him worthy of death and would have set Him free but for the disturbance got up by the priests. It does not appear that He ever claimed to be God; but He felt that He had a mission to perform and that He would be protected in it—this sustained Him until He was actually nailed to the cross—betrayed by one disciple—denied by another—and deserted by all—His faith failed and His life ended with the mourn-

ful and despairing cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me."

ESSAY No. IX,
CHRISTIAN TEACHINGS AND
DOCTRINES AND THEIR RE-
SULTS.

“Do unto others as ye would they should do unto you.” The Golden Rule. This is certainly a great improvement on the Jewish law of a tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye, and it is a great pity that the Christians of the present day do not act on it more frequently than they do. And yet this rule, if carried to the ultimate, would not answer. The bright and intelligent would have to degrade themselves to the level of the dull and stupid, lest the feelings of the less highly endowed brother should be hurt at being left behind. All energy, ambition, and competition would be at an end—and the process of degradation would go on until the race was reduced to naked barbarism. “Take no thought for to-morrow, for the things of to-morrow will take care of themselves.” This principle will certainly

ly not work in any form of human society. The squirrels, bees, ants and many other creatures that we consider beneath us, take thought for the future and lay up stores for the winter. If men would take more thought for to-morrow, and also for the future in the next world, they would probably be greatly improved. In opposition to the above command we have the case of the five wise virgins who took a supply of oil in their cans to replenish their lamps and who were commended for taking thought; but the five foolish virgins were condemned for not having taken thought.

In no part of the Gospel is goodness enjoined simply for the sake of being good; but always in hope of reward—"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth," etc. On the contrary, a premium is put on vice, thus: "—Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance." Here is inducement for sinners

to revel in crime until the eleventh hour and then repent. Even men who would naturally lead respectable lives, may be tempted to sin a little out of pure good nature, so that by repenting they might add to the amount of joy in heaven. Some modern preachers go so far as to say that good works are an abomination in the sight of the Lord, and that if your sins are as scarlet, if you believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ you will be washed white as snow! Could there be any greater inducement to commit sin? Look around in any Christian country and see the results of this teaching. Of course there are still a great many virtuous people living; but it is from their natural goodness, and not the result of their religious teaching. "But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." At this rate very few men will be free from the crime; but is it just that a man

should be punished as much for a mere passing thought as if he lived a life of impurity? "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." This is simply an impossibility. It is no use to aim at too high a standard—man is not perfect, and probably never will be—possibly he is not intended to be perfect. "Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him, if he thirsteth give him to drink, for by so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." Is this a very amiable reason for doing good? Saint Paul could also do a little cursing in a quiet, respectable way—"Alexander, the coppersmith, hath done me much wrong—may the Lord reward him according to his works."

Look at the churches of to-day. Whence come these costly edifices, with spires, bells, altars and ceremonies?—the lowly Jesus never ordered them. Like many other things pertaining to the so-called Christian religion they are derived from older forms of religion (in which they had a meaning) which exist-

ed before the time of Mosès.

Jesus said: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth. I am not come to send peace but a sword." This is true.

Some of our preachers point to the wonderful spread of the Christian religion as a proof of its divinity; but they forget to tell us that the Mohammedans far outnumber the Christians at the present time, and that Mahomet was not born until several centuries after the time of Jesus. So that if rapid growth determines the matter, Mohammedanism would be a great deal more divine than Christianity. "The tree is known by its fruits." Look around and see how crime of every kind abounds in all civilized Christian countries. Surely the tree which produces such fruit must be very bad. It is time to cut it down and cast it into the fire.

ESSAY No X,
MIRACLES, MAGIC and SCI-
ENCE.

Miracles never did, or never can take place, if the meaning of the word is something occurring beyond, or contrary to, the laws of Nature. The term is generally applied to occurrences which are beyond the experiences of the persons using it. In their conceited ignorance they think they know the limits of the laws of nature and therefore everything that is beyond their experience must be miraculous.

To most people the sum of two and two is four—it is a self-evident fact—and they cannot imagine any power that could make it three or five or any other number than four. Of course we must admit that the Almighty could do anything; but it is extremely improbable that He would alter all the books on arithmetic and upset all the calculations of the world just to astonish a few hu-

man creatures. To imagine that He could, or would, do such a foolish thing would be a slur on His Divine wisdom. Again, it is not at all likely that the Almighty would cause the sun to apparently stand still, in order to prolong the daylight, so as to enable one band of His creatures to complete the slaughter of another band of His creatures. In order to stop the apparent motion of the sun He would have to stop the rotation of the earth on its axis, and also suspend all His laws relating to the nature of matter, or else the earth would go to instant destruction. It did not take place, and it would be quite as incompatible with divine wisdom to do such a thing as to make two and two anything but four.

Owing to the ignorance, immorality and ceaseless greed for riches, such things as healing the sick by the laying on of hands, walking on the water and quelling the storm, are not common everyday occurrences at the present time; but, even now, there are some who

can perform as wonderful deeds. Jesus said that his followers should do more wonderful works than he did, if they had faith. But then, you see, his followers have not the necessary faith, and don't believe what he said unless it agrees with their own convenience. Faith must be made manifest by work. It is the same principle that insures success in any walk of life—the man who puts his whole soul and energy into working at any trade, or profession, will excel and succeed. The ordinary juggler, by constant practice and determination, can perform tricks of sleight of hand before your eyes so deftly that you cannot see how it is done; but he does not claim any supernatural power.

The Magi were a class of men who made a life study of the occult side of nature, and they were able to astonish the uninstructed. Hence the term magic came to be applied to everything beyond the comprehension of the common people. The Lord's chosen people—Jewish

or Christian—had no copyright in wonder-working. The Egyptians were able to do as wonderful things as Moses is said to have done.

If we stop to consider we shall find that every moment of our existence we are surrounded by more wonderful things than any of the so-called miracles. For instance, nobody wonders at the fact that light can pass through, and that we can see through glass; but what *is* light, and *how* does it get through such a solid substance as glass? Who can tell? In the early days of Newton it was supposed that light was a very refined, or attenuated form of matter, and that it was projected in straight lines, or rays, from the flame of the candle, or other source of light. These rays had the power of passing through transparent substances such as glass; but on striking opaque substances they were reflected, and it was these reflected rays striking our eyes caused us to see the objects. It was found that the rays of light on en-

tering a transparent substance were bent, or refracted, from their original direction if they struck the transparent surface at any angle except an angle of ninety degrees. It was also found that a ray of white light in passing through a prism was divided into a number of rays having all the colors of the rainbow. Now, let us consider what must take place in a room which is illuminated by a single small light of any kind, according to this theory: There must be an infinite number of rays emitted from the flame, because it is visible from all parts of the room, and every point of the walls, floor and ceiling of the room must reflect an infinite number of rays because they are visible from all parts of the room. These infinite numbers of infinite numbers of rays must cross each other in every possible direction, and yet they do not interfere with each other, and vision is distinct! Also the air in the room may be in a state of vibration caused by noise of any kind, and it may

be in more violent motion, caused by drafts, or by differences of temperature in different parts of the room—and still vision is distinct! Can any miracle ever conceived by the mind of man be more wonderful and incomprehensible than this? If there are two or more lights in the room the number of intersecting rays will be increased in proportion; but vision will not be interfered with—on the contrary, it will be rendered more distinct by the increase of light. The ray-theory of Newton was sufficient for all optical purposes; but it was not sufficient to cover the chemical and other phenomena accompanying light, so the Scientists set to work and evolved the undulatory, or wave theory, which is briefly as follows; The scientists assert that all space is filled with a substance which they call inter-stellar aether, and it is the waves, or undulations of this aether striking against the eye that causes the phenomena of light and sight. This inter-stellar aether is a very curious substance

—it seems to be destitute of the ordinary physical qualities of matter. Thus, it offers no sensible resistance to the motion of the heavenly bodies—it cannot be tasted, smelled, felt or seen and it makes no noise—yet the contact of its wavelets with the eye is the cause of surrounding objects becoming visible to us! Now, if we substitute the expression “undulation of inter-stellar aether” for the term “ray” in the foregoing illustration of the incomprehensibility of the phenomena of light and vision, the writer does not think that the matter will be made much easier to understand. It is to be observed that this wonderful aether is not light; but only the transmitter of light—the direction and force of its undulations have to be determined by the action of the sun, or candle or other source of light, very much as the Newtonian rays were supposed to be, and it is certainly most wonderful that the undulations don’t get mixed. Is it not a curious trait in human nature that many of the hard-



headed philosophers who admit the existence of this curious inter-stellar aether, would positively deny the possibility of the existence of the human spirit independently of the body because they have never seen it? It has been said in a previous essay that the only positive knowledge we have is mathematical knowledge—all else is liable to change. The theories of light form a good example of this fact—the ray theory was sufficient for a time—the undulatory theory has supplanted it, and will last until further discoveries make another theory necessary and then it will have to go—but two and two still make four, and a straight line is still the shortest distance between two points.

The scientific discoveries of the present age are wonderful. A few years ago it was deemed impossible to send an electric telegraphic message across the ocean; but that was accomplished, and the rising generation can scarcely realize that there was a time when electric tel-

egraphs were unknown. Next it was discovered that several messages could be sent, and in contrary directions, along one wire at the same time without confusion—and then comes the latest development—the sending of electric telegraphic messages many miles through the air without any wires at all. Next the telephone makes its appearance. Here we find that the vibrations of the air caused by the voice of the sender are sufficient to cause the electric current to carry the message over miles of wire above and below ground and through the intricacies of the “switch-board” and cause the receiving instrument to deliver the message in an audible and recognizable voice—or the message may be received by another instrument, the phonograph, which writes it down for future use. By passing the written message through another instrument, the graphophone, it can be repeated in an audible and recognizable voice any number of times. Man seems to be making progress in “chain-

ing the lightning" as witness the trolley cars, dynamos, and motors of the day; but does he know much more about the inmost nature of electricity than Franklin did, when he brought down the electric fluid from the thunder cloud by means of his kite and string?

ESSAY No. XI,
DIVINE GOVERNMENT, RE-
wards and Punishments, Special Prov-
idence, Prayer.

In speaking of any subject of which the speaker knows nothing to people who are as ignorant as himself, the best way for him to express his ideas is to illustrate them by comparing them with something with which they are acquainted. And so, in talking of Divine Government, which is beyond the comprehension of finite man, the best attempt we can make is to illustrate our ideas by referring to forms of government with which we are acquainted.

A writer of note has said that the best form of government is Autocracy—provided you can get an Angel from Heaven for the Autocrat. The difficulty of getting suitable angels for rulers prevents the autocratic being the ideal form of government on earth; but this difficulty does not apply to the Divine Ruler, who

is perfect in all His ways. Monarchies are an unsuccessful imitation of the heavenly plan—"The King can do no wrong" (?) The King being the earthly representative of the Heavenly King. Republics are a practical protest against the abuses of the Monarchial system; but they have errors of their own, and lack the unity and stability necessary for a perfect form of government.

Leaving the government of nations, let us consider what would be the course adopted by a benevolent employer, who would treat his work-people properly, and who was going to start a factory in a new district. He would appoint managers to take charge of the various departments of his business—they would have sub-managers under them—there would be clerks, mechanics, office-boys and laborers, all with their appointed duties to perform. The master would provide comfortable cottages for the laborers and mechanics to live in—small houses of a better class for the clerks,

sub-managers and managers—and houses of a still better class for the heads of departments. There would be a code of rules drawn up, with punishments varying from reprimands to fines or dismissal, for various offences—and these rules and punishments would be applicable to all classes of employes alike. If the employer wanted to know the number, sex and age of the children on his estate in order to determine what school accommodation was required for them, it is probable that he would appoint a properly qualified officer to take the census instead of going around to all the houses and cottages himself to gain the information. In a similar manner, is it not more probable that if our Heavenly Ruler really wants to know the exact number of hairs on our heads, He would appoint a whole army of officers to do the counting and make up the return, than that He would make a personal examination of the more or less dirty heads of the population of the earth?

As to Rewards and Punishments.—Is it not more reasonable to suppose that the All-wise Creator would so arrange matters as to fit suitable punishment to every crime, and suitable reward to every good action, than that His time should be occupied in punishing sinners individually, and patting the good boys on the back? Are not these things planned like effect following the cause? Fire is a very useful thing; but if one man ignorantly puts his hand into the fire, and if another man does the same thing out of bravado, they will both be burnt and suffer alike; but in the first case the man gets useful experience and will not do the same thing again. In the second case the man is justly punished for his willfully foolish conduct. Very often the wicked man appears to prosper and flourish, while the honest man remains poor, and has to work hard all his life in order to get a living. The good man has a feeling of calmness and contentment following every good act, which is unknown to

the rich rogue who, if he has any conscience at all, must live a life of fear of being found out. The honest man frequently murmurs, and thinks he is not receiving justice; but in addition to the feeling of self-satisfaction referred to above, let him wait until he gets to his home in the next life, and he will probably find that he is much better off than the rich man whose lot he was inclined to envy. "The mills of God grind slowly but they grind exceeding small." Sickness, sorrow and trouble are not unmixed evils in this life—the healthy, robust man who never knew what sickness or trouble was, is generally very selfish and has little sympathy for his suffering fellow creatures. But those who have suffered themselves are more likely to extend sympathy and aid to their suffering neighbors. The lame may help the blind, while the strong man may pass by without thinking of giving a helping hand to either of them. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth"—but the chastening process

is sometimes hard to bear.

Most people at some period of their lives have had peculiar experiences which the religiously inclined person would attribute to the intervention of a special Providence; but which a less spiritually minded person would call a lucky chance, or accident. Thus, a person may have made an appointment to meet someone about some important business but just as he was ready to start a friend, or acquaintance, called and detained him until it was too late to keep the appointment. This was vexatious at the time; but it became apparent, later on, that he had escaped considerable loss by missing that particular business transaction. Another man may have had to take a journey and determined to start by a certain train; but some delay takes place and he arrives at the station just too late to go by the train he intended to go by. He frets and fumes but he has to wait until the next train starts. When he got to his journey's end he learned that the earlier train

had met with an accident, and that several persons were killed, and many others injured. He then feels that it was a special interposition of Providence that hindered him being on the earlier train! But what about the killed and injured?—had Providence no regard for them? We are told that man is made “a little lower than the Angels.” May it not be that the “lucky” individuals in the above instanced cases were helped by Angels just a little higher than themselves in the scale of creation? But why did not Providence take care of the passengers who were killed and injured? Referring to the sketch of a model employer’s works in the earlier part of this essay:—Suppose one of the laborers was in danger of losing his life through commencing a certain piece of work in an improper manner—one of the mechanics saw his danger—stopped him and showed him how to do the work. Now this laborer had cause to be thankful to the mechanic who had saved his life; but the proprietor of the works had nothing

to do with it, and merited no particular thanks. In another part of the works we will suppose that another laborer, through his own carelessness fell off a ladder and broke one of his limbs. The proprietor of the works deserved no blame in this case. He had nothing to do with it, and he had done his duty in providing proper hospital and medical treatment in case of accidents. The laborer had no cause to accuse his employer of injustice because his limb was broken and the other man's life was saved.

Prayer—what is it? An act of worship?—or the cry of a distressed soul for help, guidance and protection?—an acknowledgement of our dependence upon a Supreme Being? What are the legitimate limits of prayer and how is it answered? As an act of worship it is right to address our supplications to the Most High, and not to our fellow creatures. “See thou do it not, for we are thy fellow creatures.” Prayer is sometimes a relief to the overburdened soul—but why is it necessary?

Would not our loving, perfect Heavenly Father supply us with all that is good and necessary for us without being asked? An average earthly father will do as much to supply his children with the necessities and comforts of life as his means will permit, without being asked—how much more may we not rely on our Heavenly Father's goodness? What are the legitimate limits of prayer? If we pray for the destruction of our enemies, or for some personal gain which would be injurious to a fellow-creature, we shall probably not obtain our desire, for the Lord—who knows all things—may see that the other party may be as worthy of help as we are. In this case we are transgressing the proper limits. Then again, a great many prayers that are made savour very much of instructing the Lord what He ought to do and what He ought not to do. Surely this is impertinence, if not something worse. The ways of the Almighty being perfect, to ask Him to alter His plans in any way,

to gratify a few poor human nites, is to ask Him to make matters less perfect. "The effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much." From this we may infer that all the prayers even of the righteous, are not effectual—but still the fact remains that in many cases the cry for help, even of a sinner, in the hour of danger meets with immediate response. But in these cases the help given is of such a nature as can be given by kind Angels, only a little higher than ourselves, without interfering with the immutable laws of God.

ESSAY No. XII,
MATTER AND SPIRIT.

The discoveries of man in the realms of matter, as already instanced in electric telegraphy without wire—machines that can repeat sounds—machines which can record speeches, music and other sounds when acted on by the vibrations of the air—and, later still, photographs of moving objects, which when thrown upon a screen by a suitable apparatus, produce an exact representation of the movements of the objects, are truly wonderful. It is a curious thing that the men who are most familiar with such impalpable things as light, air and electricity are, as a rule, the most opposed to admit that such a thing as Spirit can exist. They seem to think they have got the full measure of creation—they have never seen a spirit—therefore spirits can have no existence! There is, or was, a little narrow sect of religionists who called

themselves "Substantialists" who make a distinction of meaning between the words substance and matter. They have too much intelligence to be satisfied with the teachings of Moses, and to save themselves from falling into the darkness of materialism, they say that spirit is not matter but substance of a very refined character. But until man can make a machine that can think, and originate ideas, the writer will be of the opinion that there is an essential difference between spirit and matter. When the scientific man in the course of his investigations, notices a phenomenon which frequently recurs, he gives it a name by which to refer to it instead of having to describe it every time. Thus to such substances as glass, crystal, etc., which can be seen through, he gives the name of transparent. And to the people who are not in the habit of thinking, this word "transparent" is a sufficient explanation of the whole matter.

The great discovery of Mesmer was ig-

nored, and he was branded as a charlatan for generations; but "the world moves" and thoughtful men experimented and found that they could influence other people as Mesmer was said to have done. After a time lecturers began to travel round, giving public exhibitions of their power of controlling other people's bodies, and so the matter claimed so much attention that the Scientists could no longer ignore it, and they made a partial investigation of the subject, and came to the conclusion that the phenomena were the effect of the assertion, or "suggestion" of the operator on the subject, and they gave it the name of Hypnotism. It has become an every-day word and people speak about hypnotism as glibly as if they knew all about it. "Professors" advertise that for so many dollars they will teach anyone the art so as to enable them to control others to do their will. Even thieves have pleaded being under hypnotic control, in order to escape the consequences of their misdeeds; but so far

the plea has not been successful in the courts of law.

Instead of being anything rare, the control of matter by spirit is one of the most frequent occurrences with which we are acquainted. It is so common that people do not notice it any more than they do the fact of light shining through the window pane. We are told that our bodies are made of "dust," or according to more modern views, of a number of inert elements. It is the action of the indwelling spirit that controls the development, growth and actions of the man. It may be here objected that if life and spirit are the same in man, then the "beasts that perish" and every living creature must have a spirit. Who knows? It is very improbable that the mites in a cheese have any knowledge of all the works of nature with which man is acquainted, and it is just as probable that finite man has no conception of all that our Father's kingdom contains. How the spirit controls inert matter is not certain-

ly known. Possibly there is a subtle fluid—a kind of refined electricity, which the spirit is able to control and direct in the manner necessary to produce the phenomena of the body's vital functions. Some spirits may have a greater control of this vital fluid, or "animal magnetism" than others, and these will be the individuals who can impart health and strength to others by mesmeric manipulations, laying on of hands, etc. Why is it that so many people positively deny the possibility of imparting health and strength by such means? At the same time they have no doubt about the danger of "catching" disease. If a healthy person is in danger of catching disease from the proximity of a sick person, why should a sick person not "catch" strength from the proximity of a strong, healthy person? This is no new idea. There is the case of David, who when he got old and feeble had a healthy young woman, Abishag by name, provided to sleep with him in order to give him strength. And

it is well known that children who sleep with their aged grandparents do not prosper. Also if a strong and healthy young woman marries a weak, consumptive man, it is often observed that he will gain in health and strength but the roses fade from the woman's cheeks—she becomes a confirmed invalid, or passes away prematurely to her grave. A similar result will follow if a strong healthy man marries a delicate woman—his health will suffer and she will gain. Everybody carries a certain influence, or “magnetism,” with them which can be felt more or less by others. Thus it is a common experience that after a visit from a certain acquaintance we feel stronger, refreshed and in better spirits, while after a visit from another acquaintance we feel weak, tired and depressed. The second visitor may be quite as virtuous and refined as the first one and not have spoken of anything of a disagreeable nature; but you feel relieved when the visitor departs.

This unseen influence of one person over another is nothing new. It has always existed, and in certain cases it can be conveyed to a distance, the presence of the healer not being always necessary. Thus, St. Paul was in the habit of wearing aprons and handkerchiefs—to absorb his magnetism—and sending them to their owners to cure their sicknesses. Some modern healers adopt the same plan with varying success. Again, the prophet Elisha was in the habit of curing sickness at a distance by sending his staff to be laid on the sick person. He told his servant to hurry up and take his staff and lay it on the Shunamitish woman's sick son's face; but she did not think that treatment sufficient, and she urged him to make a personal visit. He went and imparted some of his animal heat to the child and inflated his lungs by breathing into his mouth, and so restored the apparently dead boy to life and health.

The holy men of old did quite a lu-

crative business in blessing and cursing for payment. Thus, Balak hired Balaam to curse his enemies and made very liberal offers to Balaam; but he got no advantage for his trouble, for after going to considerable expense in supplying altars, bullocks and rams he was disappointed, for his enemies were blessed instead of being cursed.

How many classes of spirits are there? We hear of Angels and Archangels. Are they a different class of spirits from man, and to which man can never attain? Or are they the spirits of just men made perfect? Then again, what of the spirits of the lower animals, and other classes of spirits distinct from man, as the Gnomes, Sprites, Genii, Fairies and Spirits of the mines? These questions have occupied the minds of thinkers of all ages and still they remain unanswered. The bulk of unthinking people affirm that man is the only animal that is blessed with an immortal soul. The intelligence shown by the lower an-

imals is only "instinct" they say; but if you observe the actions of a well used dog, you will find that to a certain extent he has reasoning faculties, and for true affection, intelligence and reliability he is far above many of the human animals. As to the genii, gnomes, faries and spirits of the mines—of course the enlightened Christians know that they are the product of ignorant superstition; but some clairvoyants declare that they have seen these little people, and the Cornish miners believe in the little spirits who guide them to where the richest veins of ore are located by the rapping noises which they make. In the olden times the believers in Metempsychosis said the souls of wicked men were incarnated in the bodies of animals, as a punishment for their sins. This was bad for the animals, as so many "good" people would try to help the Lord to do His work by being uselessly cruel to the animals, in order to increase the punishment of their wicked souls. Again, others say that the souls

of the rich and selfish have to be reincarnated in the bodies of the poor and miserable, as an expiation of their sins while in a previous life. This punishment would be more effectual if the sufferer could remember the splendor of his previous incarnation. These and other like questions cannot be answered now; but there will be plenty of time during eternity to study them all.

ESSAY No. XIII,
SPIRITUAL CONTROL.
INSPIRATION.

When Mesmer, more than a hundred years ago, first began his investigation of the unseen forces connected with the life of man he had the idea that he was dealing with some variety of electricity, and employed batteries, wires, etc., with the idea of developing, or strengthening the force. But further investigation soon showed that such apparatus was unnecessary and that the force resided in the man. It was found that passiveness on the part of the subject, and "passes" made by the operator would induce the mesmeric state and give control of the subject. When the facts of Mesmerism, or animal magnetism, as it was called, became so well known that they could no longer be ignored, the scientists, as already stated, made a partial investigation, and came to the conclusion that the ef-

fects were produced on the subjects by the assertions, or suggestions of the operator. They dubbed the whole matter Hypnotism and that was supposed to settle the matter. But "suggestion" does not account for all the phenomena connected with mesmerism, or animal magnetism—it does not account for the operator being able to control the subject without word or gesture to indicate his will—nor does it explain how the subject can be influenced at a distance—still less does it explain the phenomenon of clairvoyance, which frequently occurs in the mesmeric sleep, or trance, in which the subject describes scenes which are taking place many miles away and of which neither subject nor operator have any knowledge at the time. Nor is it easy to see how "suggestion" can prevent a patient feeling any pain whilst undergoing a severe surgical operation.

We have seen that the indwelling spirit of man controls the otherwise inert matter of the body—next, we have the spirit

of a living man controlling the body of another living man, as shown by the hypnotic experiments—the next step is the bodies of living men being controlled by spirits who are no longer encumbered with earthly bodies. This is no new idea—common language shows it—thus we frequently hear the expression “the idea strikes me.” This is an admission that the speaker does not claim the idea as his own but that it comes from without. Then again we talk of people being inspired to do or say such and such a thing, which shows that the impulse comes from without. A great poet cannot at any time sit down and write lines that will thrill the souls of people for generations to come—he must wait until the inspiration comes. The seers, and holy men of old did not claim to originate their ideas; but prefaced their teachings with “thus saith the Lord.” There are persons still living who would like to thus gain credence for their out-pourings; but it will generally be found, from the qual-

ity of their sayings, that their inspirations cannot come from any source above angels very little higher than themselves in the scale of creation.

When a man dies his spirit must begin life in the spirit world with just the same ideas, likes and dislikes, and prejudices as he had when in the body. He must begin the new life just where he left off the old one. There is no such thing as being changed into an angel of light in an instant. It is a mathematical impossibility—you cannot get from one point to a distant point without passing through all the intermediate points. You may follow the straight line—the shortest distance—or you may go a roundabout way, but you have to traverse all the intermediate points. The change called death is only leaving off the old worn out, and sometimes ill-fitting, suit of clay; but the spirit is the same and must continue to take an interest in the affairs of this world.

Most, if not all, the religious sects of

the world are founded on, or owe their power to spiritual phenomenon. The Old Testament abounds with cases of spirit power and intervention. The Christian dispensation was ushered in with remarkable manifestations of spirit power. The Roman Catholic Church depends largely on spirit manifestation through her saints and angels and holy men. The true Quakers had no use for priests, or professional preachers; but depended on the spirit controlling some member of the flock to speak. It is said that "Joe Smith" was inspired to dig up the book of Mormon—the foundation on which Mormonism is built—this is considered to be a myth by many; but is it more absurd than to believe that the Creator—the Lord of all—with His own hands quarried, dressed and engraved the two tables of the law, and presented them in a finished state to Moses in the Mount? Perhaps the least spiritual sect of religionists are the Protestant Christians. Their creed, as set forth by St. Athan-

asius, professes to be the entire truth and unalterable—it must not be added to, or taken from, and every one who doesn't subscribe to it, or swallow it whole, will “without doubt” be damned. It is an impious (or imbecile?) attempt of ignorant, conceited man to sum up the mysteries of the Almighty—a vain attempt of the finite to encompass the infinite. How any sensible person at the present day can profess to believe such a farago of nonsense is truly wonderful. “The Son was born of the Virgin Mary—and was conceived before all worlds.” If so, the Virgin Mary must have been a tough old girl when the baby was born. And then the arithmetic is so peculiar—three are equal to one, and one is equal to three—and each of the units are equal to three!!!

That the spirits of the dead retain their individuality and knowledge of the affairs of the living, and that, under favorable circumstances, they can communicate with the living is shown by the case of Samuel's interview with Saul at Endor.

It is a common saying of unthinking Christians that the spirits of the dead cannot return, because if they got into heaven, they would have no desire to return, and if they go to hell the Devil would not let them come. What miserable reasoning is this, and what a poor state of mind it shows. In the first case, if the spirit retains any human feeling, or recollection of its past life, it would certainly desire to return and comfort and help the dear ones left behind. In the second case, if the earth-life of the spirit had been so wicked as to merit damnation, it would belong to the class which the Devil would delight to send back to continue doing his work. Devout Christians combat the argument that ties of affection would induce good spirits to come back, by saying that when the spirit enters heaven it is so entranced by the brilliancy of the glory surrounding it that all remembrance of earthly life is obliterated. If this be so, it is annihilation and not life everlasting.

ESSAY No. XIV,
MODERN SPIRITUALISM.

The outbreak of spirit power, known as Modern Spiritualism, differs from previous outbreaks of the same power, in that it has come to the people generally, and cannot be claimed by any sect as their exclusive property. Its origin was humble, and it has come to the poor and ignorant more than to the learned and wise—in their own conceits. For some time, commencing in the latter part of the year 1847, Mr. Fox and his family, who lived at Hydesville near Rochester, N. Y., were disturbed every night by raps, or knockings, for which they could find no cause. These noises steadily increased until the night of March 31st, 1848, when the youngest child, Kate, who was familiar with the noises and had no fear, thus addressed the invisible knocker: "Here Mr. Split-foot, do as I do." She then snapped her fingers three

times, and she was delighted to find that the Invisible imitated the noise. She then moved her fingers and thumb three times without making any noise, and was still more delighted to find that "it could see as well as hear." After a time a code of signals was arranged, by which it was stated that the raps were caused by the spirit of a pedlar who had been murdered in the house some years before, and his body buried ten feet below the cellar floor. For full particulars of this breaking down of the partition between this world and the next, the reader is referred to Emma Hardinge's *History of Modern American Spiritualism*.

The news of this affair spread rapidly, and in a short time there were "Mediums" springing up, and wonderful manifestations taking place, all over the civilized world. Amongst the manifestations may be mentioned, table-tipping and rapping, heavy bodies lifted and suspended in the air without visible cause, solid bodies passed through solid bodies

without injury to either, persons carried through the air for considerable distances, bodies and people caused to become invisible, "materialization" of the spirits of the dead, trance and clairvoyance, reading the past lives of individuals and foretelling future events, inspirational speaking and writing, and many other manifestations of abnormal power. Of course, the knowing ones, who had no personal experience of such things, and were too wise in their own opinions to waste their time in investigation, condemned the whole matter as nothing but delusion and fraud. But, now that the period of excitement has passed, let us examine some of these phenomena by the light of science and reason.

Lifting heavy bodies off the ground, holding them suspended in the air and carrying them from one place to another. If two or three living people take hold of some object, such as a table, and hold it in the air, or carry it from place to place, it would be nothing wonderful; but if the

same people, after they have laid aside their earthly vestments, do the same thing it is considered marvelous. The reason that it takes considerable force to lift and carry things about is determined by scientists to be because they are acted on by an unseen force of Nature, discovered by the immortal Newton, called the attraction of gravitation. If a magnet be held over a piece of iron, not too large for the power of the magnet, it will "fall" upwards to the magnet and adhere to it notwithstanding the force of gravity. Now we should remember that we don't know everything yet, and that it is possible that the scientists in the next life may know more about the forces of nature than we do, and can manipulate them so as to astonish us poor dull mortals, when they want to rouse us up from our state of self-complacency. We are told that Elisha by his word caused an iron axe-head to rise from the bottom of the water and swim. Also Elijah was lifted up, body and soul, off the earth to

heaven and when part way up he dropped his mantle for Elisha's use. Need we then doubt that Mahomet's coffin was suspended in the air, or wonder at a spiritualist's table being lifted off the floor?

Next.—Passing solid matter through solid matter. Scientists tell us that the particles, or atoms, of which solid substances consist, are held together by an in-dwelling force of nature, which they have called the attraction of cohesion. At some "circles" such things as the following have been done. An iron ring is passed round for examination and found to be jointless. It is then laid on the table and the light is put out for a short time, and when the light is restored the ring is found to be round the neck of one of the sitters. How did the ring get there—it being too small to slip over the sitter's head? How can it be done? Simply the invisible operator has sufficient skill to overcome the attraction of cohesion of part of the ring while he pulls it apart sufficiently to allow him to slip

it round the sitter's neck, and to replace the parts sufficiently close together to come within the range of the attraction of cohesion. It is no more wonderful than that you can pull the armature off a magnet and then replace it. St. Peter experienced a manifestation of the kind of which we are treating, when the chains were taken off his wrists, and he was delivered from prison.

Solid objects and persons being rendered invisible.—This is not an uncommon occurrence amongst the Hindoos, and it is by no means rare nearer home. Some people spend a considerable time in looking for articles which are before their eyes all the time. Possibly the spirit-operator may know how to handle the "inter-stellar ether" so as to prevent its "undulations," reflected from certain objects, reaching the eye, or they may be able to so influence the optic nerves so as to prevent the impressions made by the said undulations reaching the brain; or the result may possibly be obtained

by the spirits being able to envelope the object with some peculiar "aura" of which we mortals know nothing at present. After the chains were removed from St. Peter's wrists he must have become invisible, as he passed the inner and outer guards without being seen. He was taken from the prison and through the city gate (which opened of itself) in a semi-unconscious state, for he thought the whole transaction was a vision, until he wakened up and found himself in the familiar street.

Clairvoyance, etc.—Investigators who have sittings with professional "Mediums" are frequently surprised at what a great amount of truth they are told about their past lives, but when it comes to describing the future, the Medium's utterances are not so clear and reliable. Prof. Denton, in his interesting book, "Nature's Secrets" advocates the idea that we leave, as it were, a photographic impression of our action, and even words, on surrounding objects as we pass along

in life, and that these impressions remain, and can be read by suitably endowed persons, whom he calls Psychometers. Good people tell us that our thoughts and actions are all recorded in the Book of Life. If so, may not the spirits have access to that book, and be able to read what is already written? But beyond the present, the pages will be a blank. Nevertheless, the spirits may be able to draw very correct conclusions from the records of the past, as to what is likely to follow in certain cases, and also they may know what it is the intention of some of our fellow creatures to do for us. It sometimes happens that the predictions of mediums are realized in the near future.

Inspirational speaking and writing.—Many impressionable persons were controlled to speak and write on spiritual and kindred subjects. Perhaps the most remarkable case was that of Andrew Jackson Davis, who when young had very little education. He was the son of a poor country shoemaker, and was apprenticed

to that trade. His remarkable gifts were first discovered and brought into notice by a gentleman who practiced healing by mesmeric or magnetic treatment, and who lectured on such subjects. He found young Davis, then about fourteen years of age, very susceptible to the magnetic influence, and when in the unconscious trance state he became clairvoyant and gave excellent diagnoses of, and prescriptions for, patients that were brought to him. After a time he announced, while in the trance state, that he was going to deliver a course of lectures in public, and he appointed the Rev. Dr. Lyon to magnetize him before the commencement of each lecture, and the Rev. Wm. Fishbough to report the lectures. The lectures were duly delivered and produced a great sensation. The spirits soon acquired such control of him, and educated him to such a degree that they could inspire him to write their ideas without his being in the trance state. He wrote a number of very

remarkable books which, perhaps, have not yet been duly appreciated. He did not claim to be a Messiah; he simply gave to the world the message that was given to him. When his work was done he retired into private life respectably and respected.

Another remarkable case of spirit control was that of Dr. Newbrough. He was an educated man and followed a lucrative profession. He was told that he had a mission to perform for the good of humanity, and he was impressed to purchase a typewriter and place it in a small room in his house, which was to be dedicated to the use of the spirits. After purifying himself by fasting for a certain time, he began to write under spirit control and did not read what was written until given permission to do so by the controlling spirit. The book was finished, printed and published under the title of "Ohaspe" and for a time it produced quite a sensation in spiritualistic circles. Some looked upon it as a second Bible,

and portions of it were read at their Sunday meetings. Dr. Newbrough and some other enthusiasts determined to tear away from the wickedness of civilization, and start a community in accordance with the principles laid down in the book. Their money was soon exhausted, inharmony crept in, the community crumbled away, and Dr. Newbrough died in extreme poverty.

So far this outpouring of spirit power does not appear, to the ordinary observer, to have accomplished much good in the world. Spiritualists are much like the rest of the world—good, bad and indifferent. Societies have been formed, newspapers published and communities started with great enthusiasm; but few, if any of them, have stood the test of time, and they are numbered with the things of the past. Mediums have been “exposed” frequently, and the main body of spiritualists are divided into two parties—the Progressives and the Re-incarnationists—who seem to hate and despise each oth-

er with as much vigor as any two Christian sects. It appears to the writer that this antagonism between the two parties arises from the old weakness of finite man assuming that he is able to comprehend and define the infinite. The Progressionists say that reincarnation would be contrary to nature's law of progress—would interfere with family relationships and might lead to improprieties. For instance, a woman's own mother might be reincarnated in one of her own children, so that when correcting her child she might be committing the undutiful act of "spanking" her own mother. We are told that there is neither marriage nor giving in marriage in the next world, but all are as the angels, so that it is possible, or probable, that family relationships do not last very long in the next life. Be that as it may, it surely would be progress for the souls of our remote ancestors—who were naked savages—to come back and gain practical knowledge of the advance of civilization. Even some of the plated

savages of the present day might be improved by being passed through the mill of experience of earth-life several times. Also, on the score of economy it might be more desirable to use imperfectly educated spirits over and over again than to require a new soul for every baby that is born.

But life on earth is not the only school for spirits to learn in. "There's something in heaven for little children to do" as the Sunday-school hymn says, and let us hope there is something for grown up spirits to do also. May it not be that spirits may be able to work out their own salvation by watching over and helping spirits still in the flesh? The lower class of spirits might be employed in protecting us from accidents and warning us of danger—higher spirits might impress us with higher ideas, and at the same time be promoting their own advancement, and so on. The Progressives affirm that the spirit-world is divided into "spheres."

The ignorant and dark spirits gravitate to the lowest sphere, next to the earth. Each succeeding sphere is inhabited by a more enlightened class of spirits than the preceding one. A lower class of spirits can not enter a higher sphere until they are sufficiently purified; but the higher spirits can pass through all the lower spheres on their errands of mercy to suffering mankind.

There are many differences of opinion amongst the Reincarnationists which are beyond the scope of these essays to enter into.

May it not be that the want of harmony and cohesion among Spiritualists is one of the strongest evidences that the movement is being controlled by a higher and wiser power than man? If the spiritualists were markedly better than their neighbors, and if mediums were all reliable, there would be a danger of the whole movement crystallizing into another little sect, of which we have too many already. But the idea that spirits

exist, and can communicate with the living is becoming familiar to all classes—and perhaps the time may come when each individual will wake up to the fact that he is nothing but a spirit, although clothed in flesh, and that his thoughts and actions, in order to secure present and future happiness, require careful attention every day in the week and not on Sundays only. When man shall have realized this truth, modern spiritualism will have performed its mission.

Like every good thing Spiritualism can be abused, and it is not free from danger. Thus, some extra “cute” people, after being convinced that there is “something in it” will try to turn it to advantage by asking the spirits how certain speculations, or business transactions will turn out, or which horse will win, or whether stocks are going to rise or fall. As like attracts like, or as the old saying has it, “birds of a feather flock together,” possibly the soul of some old tipster or business man may come and give a correct

“tip” to the inquirer, but in the end such inquirers get badly “left.” Again, another class of enthusiastic inquirers appeal to the “dear spirits” to instruct and advise them in every little trifling affair of life. This is degrading to the inquirer—it is giving up his individuality and becoming a mere tool in the hands of someone else. It is delightful to feel that we have friends, both in this life and the next, who in emergency, will give us assistance and help, but if we trouble our earthly friends too often they will give us the “cold shoulder,” and probably our spirit friends will, apparently, do the same thing, with the good intention of making us exert our own energies, and perform our duties in life.

What are called the physical manifestations are no doubt useful in attracting the attention of the unthinking people, but they are the lowest form of spirit communion. Moving and carrying heavy articles, passing solid bodies through solid bodies, playing on musical instru-

ments, materializations, etc., belong to this class. It is amongst the Mediums for this class of manifestations that the greatest number of "exposures" take place. It does not follow that the Medium is solely to blame—he or she may start out in their career with perfectly good intentions, but the too constant control by a low class of spirits for the amusement of a rather unintelligent class of sitters will tell on the moral perceptions of the Medium, and they and their "guides" are apt to adopt deception in order to more easily keep the show running and satisfy their patrons. It is right for true investigators to see such manifestations to satisfy themselves that such things do occur; but to go night after night and year after year to witness furniture being knocked about, and hear musical instruments being played upon without hands, is a loss of time and does not promote the increase of the sum of knowledge. The next higher form of manifestation is the description of what the Medium hears

and sees. But here comes the temptation to conceal anything that might be painful or offensive to the sitter. The quality of communications should be judged by the amount of intelligence displayed. But the highest form of communication is Inspiration, which we all might have if we prepared ourselves to receive it.

The spirit was not in the fire or the flood nor in the earthquake; but in the still small voice within.

One reason why mediums are frequently uneducated persons is that they are more easily convinced than more educated people would be. Thus when a simple, uneducated person sees a spirit, or hears a voice where there is no speaker to be seen, he is satisfied that he sees and hears, but a more educated person, who has no belief in the invisible, if he should happen to see a shadowy form flitting before his eyes would think that his stomach was out of order, or if he heard voices in the air, he would know that his nervous system was out of bal-

ance, and he would probably take medicine to restore himself to health. Thus the efforts of his spirit friends to communicate with him would be thwarted and they would have to seek a more easily influenced subject. It is possible that no Medium has yet really seen a spirit, or heard them speak, although they truly describe and repeat what they think they see and hear. When a spirit wishes to make its presence known, in order to prove its identity, it must present the same appearance to the seer as he had when in this life. Suppose, for instance, an old veteran who had lost a limb and received a severe wound on his face, wished to have an interview with a young friend still on earth; he would have to appear lame and with the mark left by the wound on his face, in order to be recognized; but it is to be hoped that he is not doomed to hobble through eternity on one leg and with a disfiguring scar upon his face. This class of manifestations are probably produced by the spirit

hypnotising the medium and thus producing the required impression on his or her brain.

Some believers in Spiritualism, in the writer's opinion, do not properly appreciate the value of their knowledge—they do not treat their invisible friends with as much courtesy as they do their everyday acquaintances in the body. They don't seem to think that time is of any value to their guardian angels, and are not punctual in keeping their appointments to meet them at circles or at sittings for development. They are frequently rude to controls that do not come up to their ideas of advancement, and call poor ignorant spirits, wicked spirits, and order them to be gone, without any regard to the feelings of the spirit. This is wrong, for it shows a very poor example to the spirit, and possibly the spirits might retaliate on persons who do not treat them with even common politeness. These ignorant spirits may be brought to the circle by the higher powers for the good

purpose of enlightening them, and perhaps, also, to teach the sitters not to suppose that all the spirits that visit their circle must of necessity be of a very high class. But these are little angularities which will wear away when the people get more enlightened.

Spiritualism, although obscured by ignorance and worldliness, is doing a great work in breaking up old creeds and errors and throwing open the hitherto veiled mysteries of life and death. In this it deserves the name of being the Harbinger of the coming Dispensation!—the dispensation of FREE THOUGHT.

ESSAY No. XV,
THE COMING DISPENSATION.

There seems to be an inborn hope in civilized man all over the earth that a better state of things will ultimately prevail in the world. There is certainly room for great improvement; but it is very unlikely that life on earth will ever become so pure and happy as to be a serious competitor with the joys of heaven. This life, as long as civilization lasts, must be a life of toil, and more or less discomfort to the bulk of the people. Even if wickedness and crime were done away with, toil and privation and division of the people into separate classes would still remain. This is necessary in order to produce the simplest of the comforts we enjoy. Thus, to produce our clothing, cotton has to be cultivated and after it is grown it has to be spun and woven into various fabrics. In order to do the spinning and weaving machinery is required. The machinery

is largely composed of iron; in order to obtain the iron, iron mines and coal mines and iron works are necessary. The strong, able-bodied men who perform this heavy kind of work form one class. Next above them come the mechanics and tradesmen of different kinds, whose work is still hard, but they have to use their brains to a greater extent than the mere laborers. And so on through the different grades until we come to the scientists and artists, who work nearly entirely with their brains and very little with the remainder of their bodies. It seems as if each individual was endowed with a certain limited amount of vital energy. If a man's body is developed to enable him to do hard work day after day, and year after year, his mental faculties cannot be very highly cultivated. On the other hand, if a man's mental faculties are highly cultivated his body will be comparatively weak. A highly educated genius would be of no use for working in a coal or iron mine, and

would not be able to earn a living in an iron-works. On the principle of like attracting like, the different classes of workers must form different classes socially also. The hard worker would not enjoy the society of the scientists—their conversation would be as an unknown tongue to him, and the scientist would not enjoy the company of the uncultured working man, except perhaps occasionally, when he wanted a study in human nature. But these “upper classes” have no right to look down upon, or despise the lower classes; for they are altogether dependent on them. They should remember the old tale of the Organist, who one day on leaving the church was addressed by the man who worked the bellows of the organ, who said “That was some mighty fine music we made to-day.” “We made,” replied the Organist, superciliously. “I should like to know what you had to do with making the music.” The bellows-blower made no reply but the next day when the Organist was prepared to

charm the congregation with an extra fine voluntary, the organ was silent when he pressed the keys—the bellows-blower had gone home—and then the Organist realized what an important part the bellows-man had in the production of the music. The humble working man may be quite as moral, good and virtuous as the highest genius in the land, and is entitled to the greatest amount of happiness that he can enjoy. He is the foundation on which the others rest. Out of the same lump of clay the Potter can fashion different vessels—but they are all useful.

The life of the human race may be likened to the life of the individual. First, babyhood—the period of complete ignorance. Second, childhood—the period of false teaching (green cheese, etc.). Third, boyhood—the period of thoughtlessness, carelessness, selfishness, “fun” and the sowing of “wild oats,” and Fourth, manhood—the period for throwing off boyish follies, and acting independently. The Pre-Mosaic time may be taken to repre-

sent the infancy of mankind—the Mosaic dispensation the period of childhood—and the Chirstian dispensation the period of boyhood, from which we are just emerging—the Fourth, or coming dispensation, is the period of manhood, FREE THOUGHT, and personal responsibility. Of course, the young man, for want of experience, may make some mistakes, but ultimately he will reach maturity. It is here that the much despised modern spiritualism will prove its value to mankind. It has not come to the rich and powerful exclusively; but to the poor and lowly, and it is spreading through all classes and quietly undermining old false ideas, and is destined to be the light of the world, when properly understood and realized! That the old ideas are losing their hold on the people is evident from such facts as one Presbyterian Minister publicly renouncing the doctrine of predestination, and another Minister advocating such things as playing golf, and going to a theatre on Sunday, and other

Ministers admitting that their creeds need revising. Again, the wickedness, misery and crime that is rampant all over the civilized world, and due to ages of false teaching, is proof that a great change is needed. If a great and holy Teacher was to rise to point out the right way he could accomplish nothing of importance to the world—he would be considered a mere “crank” and if he taught in the streets, the police would order him to move on, and if the crowd of listeners was so great as to impede the traffic, he would be arrested and punished. The truth will have to be developed in each one of the people so that all may recognize it without being told by any individual, or class of people, to know the Lord, for all shall know Him from the least to the greatest. All men, like sheep, have gone astray; but there have been so many false shepherds that the people have no longer any confidence in shepherds, and object to be driven. Spiritualism has already accomplished a great

deal in upsetting such ideas as vicarious atonement, being saved by faith, being washed white in lamb's blood, being changed in an instant from a regular devil into an angel of light, and such-like absurdities. Selfishness appears to be the ruling characteristic of mankind at the present time, and possibly a refined selfishness may be the means of redeeming him from sin and misery. The search for happiness must start from the centre—from the individual himself. If each individual was convinced through self-communion and aided and strengthened by communion with his spirit friends that the surest way to gain success and happiness both here and hereafter, was to do rightly on all occasions—that every good act would be suitably rewarded and every bad act justly punished—that he had to work out his own salvation—then self-interest would prompt him to do that which is right on all occasions. When everyone practices this kind of refined selfishness, the time will have come when

the spears may be converted into pruning hooks and the swords into plough shares.

It will be some time before this state of things will be realized; but in the mean time Spiritualism can do a great deal by improving the conduct of the individual. The so-called religious people are in the habit of saying that the all-seeing eye of God is always on them, and that He sees their every thought and action—but that they do not believe it is evident, or their actions would be different. They have more respect for the opinion of their fellow creatures. Thus, a woman will keep her front porch and windows, and hall and reception room clean and tidy, and will meet her visitors with a smiling face in order to prevent “Mrs. Grundy” making unpleasant remarks. At the same time the remainder of her house may be far from being tidy, and she may neglect her children and not attend to her husband’s comforts. Now, how different would be her conduct if she was thoroughly convinced that there were per-

haps a dozen or more Mrs. Grundies present, laughing and sneering, and picking her to pieces all the time. Again, there are some men who will present the pink of neatness when from home, and speak to everyone they meet in a gentlemanly manner, in order to win the good opinion of Brown, Jones and Robinson; but at home they are slovenly in their habits, and they will curse and swear at their wives and abuse their children. If they knew that there was a crowd of Browns, Joneses and Robinsons present all the time, would they not mend their manners?—thus the knowledge of the constant presence of a class of spirits, or angels, not a great deal more advanced than ourselves, would have a greater influence in regulating our conduct than the profession of belief in the all-seeing eye of the Almighty beholding our actions.

There are many other ways in which the knowledge of spirit presence and communion will be of the greatest im-

portance and benefit to mankind. Thus, it will break up superstition of all kinds, teach people to think for themselves, and search for the facts of nature and science. It will be a comfort to the lonely wanderer through this life to know that he has got friends who, although invisible, are doing their best to help, guide and protect him. In the hour of death it will be a great comfort to know that we shall not be relentlessly and unjustly and everlastingly tormented for mistakes and errors committed in this life—that we shall have an opportunity of working out our own salvation—and that loving friends will meet us and instruct us in the new life on which we are about to enter—that we have something more to look forward to than the shadowy and remote chance of being squeezed in Abraham's bosom or embraced in the arms of Jesus.

In these essays the writer has endeavored not to positively assert anything, except such self-evident facts as admit

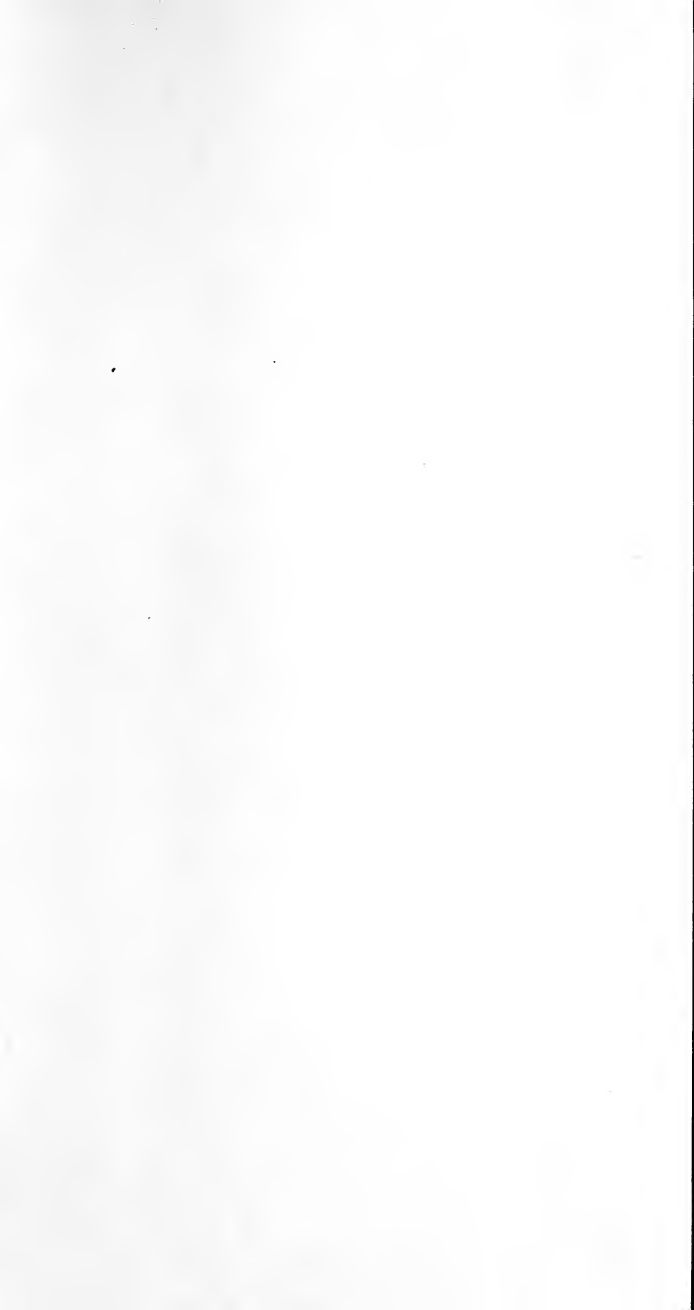
of no difference of opinion, in all else the reader is invited to use his own reasoning faculties and think out the various matters alluded to for himself. Neither does he claim that any of the ideas are new, but being presented in a new form he hopes they may be the means of bringing light and comfort to some of his fellow creatures.

“When the wicked man turneth away
“from the wickedness he hath committed,
“and doeth that which is lawful and right,
“he shall save his soul alive.”

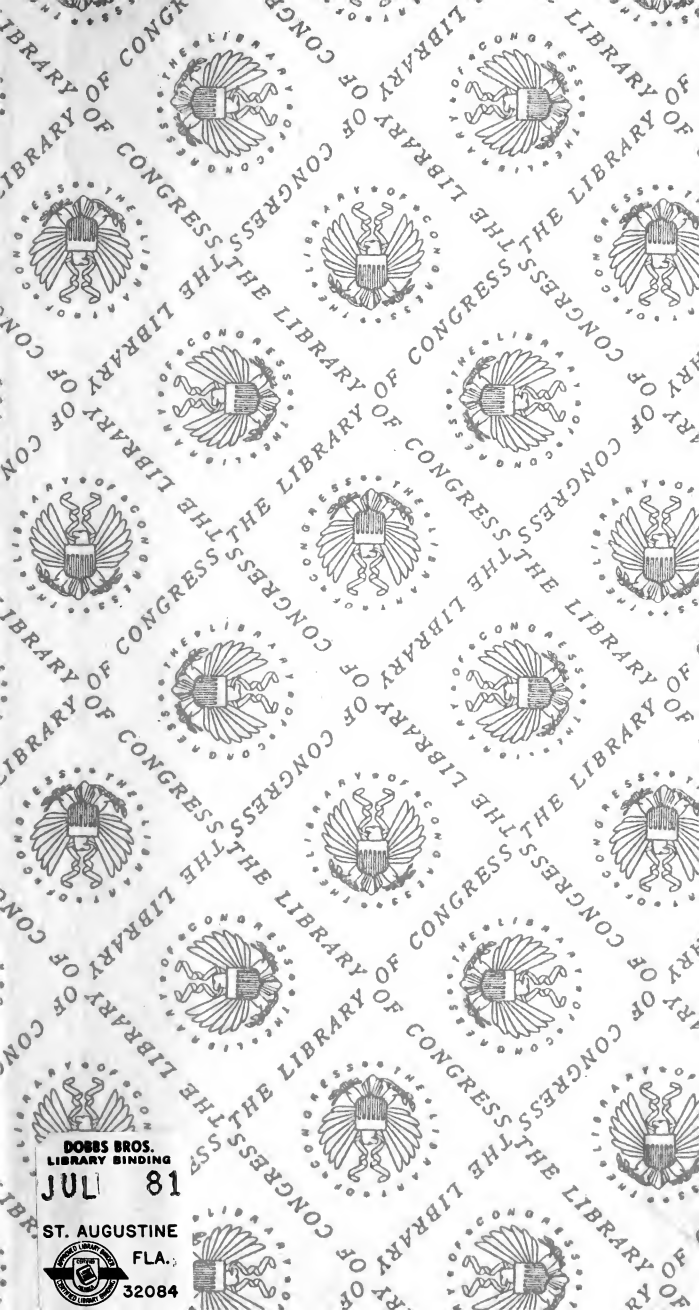
“He hath shewed thee, O man, what is
“good; and what doth the Lord require
“of thee, but to do justly; and to love
“mercy and to walk humbly with thy
“God.”

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